

Film Theory
Winter 99
Chuck Kleinhans
MW 10-12, 325 Annie May Swift
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The course examines the major aesthetic and other theoretical issues developed in film theory and practice. Intended as an introduction for students studying film theory for the first time, it studies aesthetic and cultural issues as a background to film theory, surveys the major figures and issues in film theory, and makes connections to related media and cultural analysis. The first quarter of the course is an introduction and historical overview. The second quarter (which requires the first quarter as a pre-requisite) will be taught in 99-2000 and concentrates on contemporary discussions in greater depth.

The course is organized as a reading, lecture, and discussion experience. Readings should be done in advance and brought to class. The lectures will provide a broad background to the readings, discuss some particular points in the readings in detail, and provide the experience of seeing how one theorist, the teacher, uses theory. Discussion of particular readings and screenings of some films (and excerpts) will be part of most classes. In addition to two quizzes on reading, students will be assigned several short essays and a take home final. Attendance is taken into account in the final grade.

All students are required to have an e-mail address. Reading summaries and short essays will be distributed to the entire class by e-mail. In addition some readings will be on Electronic Reserve at the library.

Additional readings on reserve at library.

There will be a one time charge of \$8.00 for xeroxed materials for the course. This will provide 160 pp of handouts.

Jan 5
course introduction

Jan 7
intro to aesthetics
Raymond Williams, 'Realism'

Jan 12
Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'

Jan 14
short paper no. 1 due--'defining film/cinema'
Kracauer, 'Cult of Distraction,' 'The Mass Ornament'

Jan 19
Jean Epstein, "On Magnification,"
"The Senses I (b), "
"On Certain Characteristics of Photogenic"

Jan 21
Eisenstein, "Problems of Cinema Stylistics"
Documents from Lef

Jan 26
Eisenstein, 'A Dialectic Approach to Film Form,'
'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema'

Jan 28
Brecht 'The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication'
Arnheim 'In Praise of Blindness'

Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Alexandrov, 'Statement on Sound'
Eisenstein, 'Conversation with Eisenstein on Sound Cinema.'

Feb 2
Richter, The Struggle for Film (exerpts)
Eisenstein, 'Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today'

Feb 4
first round of essays due
quiz on reading to date

Feb 9
Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Film'
Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image'
Bazin 'An Aesthetic of Reality'

Feb 11
Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster" [res]
Sarris, " Table of contents and Intro" from American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968 [res]

Feb 16
Metz, "Problems of Denotation in the Fiction Film"

Feb 18
screening: Morocco.
Cahiers du cin'ma, Morocco analysis

Feb 23
Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

Feb 25
screening: Two Or Three Things I Know About Her
second essays due

Mar 4
Augst, "The Turn toward Psychoanalysis" [res]
Heath, "Narrative Space" [res]

Mar 6
in class analysis based on second essays

Mar 9
wrap up lecture
screening for final

Mar 11
screening for final

Final
--take home essay due Mon March 16, noon

Short paper no. 1 10% of final. A 500 word essay based on your experience of one or more of the films/objects in the current Museum of Contemporary Art show, 'Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film since 1945.' You are to tour the exhibit, taking notes (which you will also use on the final). Select one or a group of items for a discussion of 'defining film/cinema.' The MCA is free Tues Jan 6. and \$4 for students other times. Tu-F 11-6, Wed to 8; SatSun 10-6. 220 E. Chicago. (Chicago el stop, walk east about 5 blocks; parking is expensive or non-existent in this area).

Short paper no. 2 10% of final. A 500 word essay providing a critical context for an assigned reading, screening, issue, or figure discussed in the course. This will be assigned by the instructor, and presented orally in class as well as published in written form.

Summary no. 1. 20% of final. A 500 word summary plus a 1000 word interpretive essay from a provided bibliography on Eisenstein, Kracauer, or Bazin. The important part of the project is your own analysis and evaluation of the essay, based on your knowledge.

Summary no. 2. 20% of final. Another 500 word summary plus a 1200 word interpretive essay from a provided bibliography and filmography. You will summarize an article that depends on analysis of one film (such as the editors of Cahiers du cin'ma on Young Mr. Lincoln) and view the film. The important part of the project is your own analysis and evaluation of the essay, based on your knowledge of the film.

Quiz 10% Short quiz based on readings to that date.

Final take home essay. 30 % of final grade. 1500-2500 word essay in response to a question handed out at the end of the course intended to synthesize your learning in the course. Due in Chuck's mailbox and e-mail